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Anarchist Organization and the Insurrectional Project

for the creation of moments of mass destruction where
creativity and anger combine in unpredictable collusion

Further Reading

Venomous Butterfly Publications
<http://www.omnipresence.mahost.org/vbp.htm>

Outlaw History and Theory
<http://www.charm.net/~clauastro/outlaw/default.htm>

Killing King Abacus
http://www.geocities.com/kk_abacus

Insurrectionary Anarchists of the Coast Salish Territories
(Vancouver, BC)
http://www.geocities.com/insurrectionary_anarchists/

Solidarios
http://www.geocities.com/ANAR_GR

Guerra Sociale
<http://www.guerrasociale.org>

Infoshop: Anarchy on the Web
<http://www.infoshop.org>

Anarchism in New Orleans
<http://nolaanarchy.cjb.net>

The Affinity Group

To have affinity means to have knowledge of the other, to know how they think on social issues and how they think they can intervene in the social clash. This deepening of knowledge between comrades is an aspect that is often neglected, impeding effective action.

Having chosen the path of direct action, of unmediated attack against power, and having chosen to act where one is now, the question of how to organize these actions arises. Practically, the desire to see one's own struggle against the social order become a social struggle shows itself in the desire to act with others. For the types of actions most consistent with an anarchist insurrectional perspective--small actions that can be easily imitated and improved upon, using unsophisticated means that are available to anyone--the affinity group provides an effective method of organizing.

Let's be clear from the beginning, an affinity group is not a permanent organization that one joins. It is a method for organizing an action based on affinity between those taking part in the action. So the essential first step is the development of relationships of affinity. Affinity is not a matter of feeling good around each other. For the purpose of an insurrectional practice, affinity develops through the process of getting to know each other as comrades on an ever deepening level--that is coming to understand how the other understands the struggle against this society and how they feel they can intervene in it. Through discussion, such questions can be clarified, strengths and weaknesses made evident and possibilities for shared actions revealed.

It is when the possible projects of action become evident that certain of those who have been developing affinity come together as a group with the specific purpose of carrying out a particular action. When this project is completed, the particular group disbands as such, but the relations of affinity continue.

In the course of carrying out actions together, affinity will deepen and strong bonds may grow between those involved. This is to be expected, since as anarchists we do not see our activity as separated from our lives, but rather as an expression of the way we view and choose to live life. Thus we put the whole of our being into these actions. Our passion for freedom and intensity of life goes into our projects, so how could it not affect the relationships of affinity we choose to develop?

But what is essential about the affinity group is that it is a method for organizing small actions of the sort necessary for attacking the many facets of power that we confront everyday, which avoids developing a cumbersome formal organization and allows for the fluidity necessary for the development of an intelligent anarchist analysis and practice.

Developing Relationships of Affinity

"Today the spirit drowns in a mass of chance encounters. We are looking for those who are still alive enough to support each other beyond this; those fleeing Normal Life."

—Against Sleep and Nightmare

We live in a society in which most of our encounters have already been defined in terms of predetermined roles and relationships in which we have no say. A randomness devoid of surprise surrounds the scheduled torment of work with a "free time" lacking in joy, wonder or any real freedom to act on one's own terms, a "free time" not so very different from the job from which it is supposed to be a respite. Exploitation permeates the whole of existence as each of our interactions is channeled into a form of relating that has already been determined in terms of the needs of the ruling order, in order to guarantee the continued reproduction of a society in which a few control the conditions of everyone's existence and so own all of our lives.

So the revolt against our exploitation is not essentially a political or even an economic struggle, but a struggle against

tions of revolt can emerge and latent conflict can develop and be brought to the fore. In this way a contact is established between the anarchist minority and the specific situation where the struggle can be developed.

7. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL: individualism and communism, a false problem

--We embrace what is best in individualism and what is best in communism.

--Insurrection begins with the desire of individuals to break out of constrained and controlled circumstances, the desire to appropriate the capacity to create one's own life as one sees fit. This requires that they overcome the separation between them and their conditions of existence. Where the few, the privileged, control the conditions of existence, it is not possible for most individuals to truly determine their existence on their terms. Individuality can only flourish where equality of access to the conditions of existence is the social reality. This equality of access is communism; what individuals do with that access is up to them and those around them. Thus there is no equality or identity of individuals implied in true communism. What forces us into an identity or an equality of being are the social roles laid upon us by our present system. There is no contradiction between individuality and communism.

8. WE ARE THE EXPLOITED, we are the contradiction: this is no time for waiting

--Certainly, capitalism contains deep contradictions which push it towards procedures of adjustment and evolution aimed at avoiding the periodic crises which afflict it; but we cannot create ourselves in waiting for these crises. When they happen they will be welcomed if they respond to the requirements for accelerating the elements of the insurrectional process. As the exploited, however, we are the fundamental contradiction for capitalism. Thus the time is always ripe for insurrection, just as we can note that humanity could have ended the existence of the state at any time in its history. A rupture in the continual reproduction of this system of exploitation and oppression has always been possible.

for the *defense* of certain interests, but of *attack* on certain interests.

--Informal organization is based on a number of comrades linked by a common affinity; its propulsive element is always action. The wider the range of problems these comrades face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that the real organization, the effective capacity to act together, i.e. knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all takes place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programs, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organization is therefore a specific organization which gathers around a common affinity.

The anarchist minority and the exploited and excluded:

--We are of the exploited and excluded, and thus our task is to act. Yet some critique all action that is not part of a large and visible social movement as "acting in the place of the proletariat." They counsel analysis and waiting, instead of acting. Supposedly, we are not exploited alongside the exploited; our desires, our rage and our weaknesses are not part of the class struggle. This is nothing but another ideological separation between the exploited and subversives.

--The active anarchist minority is not slave to numbers but continues to act against power even when the class clash is at a low level within the exploited of society. Anarchist action should not therefore aim at organizing and defending the whole of the class of exploited in one vast organization to see the struggle from beginning to end, but should identify single aspects of the struggle and carry them through to their conclusion of attack. We must also move away from the stereotypical images of the great mass struggles, and the concept of the infinite growth of a movement that is to dominate and control everything.

--The relationship with the multitude of exploited and excluded cannot be structured as something that must endure the passage of time, i.e. be based on growth to infinity and resistance against the attack of the exploiters. It must have a more reduced specific dimension, one that is decidedly that of attack and not a rearward relationship.

--We can start building our struggle in such a way that condi-

the totality of our current existence (and so against politics and economy), against the daily activities and interactions imposed on us by the economy, the state and all the institutions and apparatus of domination and control that make up this civilization. Such a struggle cannot be carried out by any means. It requires a method of acting in and encountering the world in which new relations, those of free individuals who refuse to be exploited and dominated and equally refuse to dominate or exploit, manifest here and now. In other words, our struggle must be the immediate reappropriation of our lives, in conflict with the present society.

Starting from this basis, the refusal of formality and the development of relations of affinity cannot be seen in merely tactical or strategic terms. Rather, they are reflections in practice of what we are fighting for if we are, indeed, fighting to take back our lives, to reappropriate the capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence—i.e., the capacity for self-organization.

The development of relationships of affinity is specifically the development of a deep knowledge of one another in a complex manner, a profound understanding of each other's ideas, dreams, desires, passions, aspirations, capacities, conceptions of the struggle and of life. It is, indeed a discovery of what is shared in common, but more significantly it is a discover of differences, of what is unique to each individual, because it is at the point of difference that one can truly discover the projects one can carry out with another.

Since the development of relationships of affinity is itself a reflection of our aims as anarchists and since it is intended to create a deep and ever-expanding knowledge of one another, it cannot simply be left to chance. We need to intentionally create the opportunity for encounters, discussions and debates in which our ideas, aspirations and visions of the revolutionary struggle can come into contention, where real affinities and real conflicts can come out and be developed—not with the aim of finding a unifying middle ground in which every one is equally compromised, but to clarify distinctions and so discover a real basis for creating projects of action that aren't sim-

ply playing the role of radical, activist or militant, but that are real reflections of the desires, passions and ideas of those involved. While publications, internet discussion boards and correspondence can provide means for doing this on some levels, to the extent to which they are open forums they tend to be too random, with potential for the discussion to lose any projectuality and get sidetracked into the democratic exchange of opinions which have little connection to one's life. To my mind, the best and most significant discussions can take place in face-to-face encounters between people with some clarity of why they are coming together to discuss. Thus, organizing discussion groups, conferences, meetings and the like is an integral part of the development of relations of affinity and so of projects of action.

The necessity to pursue the development of relations of affinity with intention does not mean the development of a formal basis for affinity. It seems to me that formality undermines the possibility of affinity, because it is by nature based on a predetermined, and therefore arbitrary, commonality. Formal organization is based upon an ideological or programmatic unity that ultimate comes down to adherence to the organization as such. Differences must be swept aside for the cause of the organization, and when differences are swept aside, so also are dreams, desires, aspirations and passions since these can only ever belong to the individual. But, in fact, formal organization has nothing to do with intention or projectuality. In fact, by providing an ideology to adhere to it relieves the individual of the responsibility of thinking for herself and developing his own understanding of the world and of her struggle in it. In providing a program, it relieves the individual of the necessity of acting autonomously and making practical analyses of the real conditions in which she is struggling. So, in fact, formality undermines projectuality and the capacity for self-organization and so undermines the aim of anarchist struggle.

Relationships of affinity are the necessary basis of self-organization on the most basic daily level of struggle and of life. It is the deep and growing knowledge of one another that provides the basis for developing projects of revolt that truly reflect our own aspirations and dreams, for developing a shared

ing in an illusory emancipation carried out by parliamentary decree, to the very point of actively participating in our own exploitation ourselves.

--There might perhaps be individual reasons for doubting the attempt to reach one's aims with violent means. But when non-violence comes to be raised to the level of a non-violable principle, and where reality is divided into 'good' and 'bad,' then arguments cease to have value, and everything is seen in terms of submission and obedience. The officials of the anti-globalization movement, by distancing themselves and denouncing others have clarified one point in particular: that they see their principles--to which they feel duty-bound--as a claim to power over the movement as a whole.

5. ILLEGALITY; insurrection isn't just robbing banks

--Insurrectionary anarchism isn't a morality on survival: we all survive in various ways, often in compromise with capital, depending on our social position, our talents and tastes. We certainly aren't morally against the use of illegal means to free ourselves from the fetters of wage slavery in order to live and carry on our projects, yet we also don't fetishize illegalism or turn it into some kind of religion with martyrs; it is simply a means, and often a good one.

6. INFORMAL ORGANIZATION; not professional revolutionaries or activists, not permanent organizations

From party/union to self-organization:

--Profound differences exist within the revolutionary movement: the anarchist tendency towards quality of the struggle and its self-organization and the authoritarian tendency towards quantity and centralization.

--Organization is for concrete tasks: thus we are against the party, syndicate and permanent organization, all of which act to synthesize struggle and become elements of integration for capital and the state. Their purpose comes to be their own existence, in the worst case they first build the organization then find or create the struggle. Our task is to act; organization then means. Thus we are against the delegation of action or practice to an organization: we need generalized action that leads to insurrection, not managed struggles. Organization should not be

methods to be used in a coordinated and fruitful way.

--Autonomous action: the self-management of struggle means that those that struggle are autonomous in their decisions and actions; this is the opposite of an organization of synthesis which always attempts to take control of struggle. Struggles that are synthesized within a single controlling organization are easily integrated into the power structure of present society. Self-organized struggles are by nature uncontrollable when they are spread across the social terrain.

3. UNCONTROLLABILITY versus managed revolt: the spread of attack

--It is never possible to see the outcome of a specific struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. The passage from the various insurrections--limited and circumscribed--to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any method.

--What the system is afraid of is not these acts of sabotage in themselves, so much as their spreading socially. Every proletarianized individual who disposes of even the most modest means can draw up his or her objectives, alone or along with others. It is materially impossible for the State and capital to police the apparatus of control that operates over the whole social territory. Anyone who really wants to contest the network of control can make their own theoretical and practical contribution. The appearance of the first broken links coincides with the spreading of acts of sabotage. The anonymous practice of social self-liberation could spread to all fields, breaking the codes of prevention put into place by power.

--Small actions, therefore, easily reproducible, requiring unsophisticated means that are available to all, are by their very simplicity and spontaneity uncontrollable. They make a mockery of even the most advanced technological developments in counter-insurgency.

4. PERMANENT CONFLICTUALITY versus mediation with institutional forces

--Conflictuality should be seen as a permanent element in the struggle against those in power. A struggle which lacks this element ends up pushing us towards mediating with the institutions, grows accustomed to the habits of delegating and believ-

struggle that is based in the recognition and, at its best, the passionate enjoyment of our very real and beautiful differences. The development of social revolution will, of course, require an organizing of activity beyond the range of our relationships of affinity, but it is the projects that we develop from these relationships that give us the capacity for self-organization, the strength to refuse all formality and, thus, all of the groups that claim to represent the struggle, whether they call themselves parties, unions or federations. In the relationship of affinity, a new way of relating free from all roles and every hackneyed social relationship already begins to develop, and with it an apparent unpredictability that the authorities will never understand. Here and now, we grasp a world of wonder and joy that is a powerful weapon for destroying the world of domination.

The Insurrectional Project

An anarchist insurrectional project requires a method that reflects the world we desire and the reality of the world we seek to destroy. Acting in small groups based on affinity fits both of these requirements. Power in the present world no longer has a real center, but spreads itself throughout the social terrain. Acting in small groups allows projects of attack to spread across the terrain as well. But more significantly, this method brings one's aim into one's method--revolt itself becomes a different way of conceiving relations. Anarchists always talk of refusing vanguardism--but such a refusal means refusing evangelism, the quantitative myth that seeks to win converts to an ideology of anarchism. Acting in small groups to attack the state and capital puts anarchy into practice as the self-organization of one's own projects, in relations based on affinity--real knowledge of and trust in each other--rather than adherence to a belief system. Furthermore, this sort of action, liberated from the quantitative, does not wait until "conditions are right", until one is guaranteed a large following or until one is certain of the results--it is action without measure. Thus, it carries within it the world we desire--a world of relations without measure.

Some Ideas on Insurrectional Anarchist Organization

Once one has decided not to put up with being ruled or exploited and therefore to attack the social order based on domination and exploitation, the question of how to go about this arises. Since those of us who rise up in rebellion cannot let themselves be organized by others without falling under a new form of domination, we need to develop the capacity to organize our own projects and activities—to put the elements together that are necessary for acting projectually in a coherent manner.

Thus, organization, as I'm using the term here, means bringing together the means and relations that allow us to act for ourselves in the world. This starts with the decision to act, the decision that our thirst to have all of our life as our own requires us to fight against the state, capital and all of the structures and institutions through which they maintain control over the conditions of our existence. Such a decision puts one in the position of needing to develop the specific tools that make intelligent action possible. First a thorough analysis of the present conditions of exploitation is necessary. Based on this analysis, we choose specific objectives to aim for and means for achieving these objectives based upon our desires and the ideas that move us. These means, these tools for action must first and foremost include ways of making our objectives, desires and ideas known to others in order to find affinities, others with whom we can create projects of action. Thus, we look to create occasions for encounters and discussion in which similarities and differences are clarified, in which the refusal of false unities allow the real affinities—real knowledge of whether and how we can work together—can develop. These tools allow the projectuality of individuals in revolt to become a force in movement, an element propelling toward the insurrectional break. Since affinity is the basis for the relations we are aiming to use in action, informality is essential—only here can its forms be expressions of real needs and desires.

So our desire to create insurrection moves us to reject all formal organization—all structures based on membership and the attempt to synthesize the various struggles under one

organization of attack. These notes are in no way a closed or finished product; we hope they are a part of an ongoing discussion, and we most certainly welcome responses (interesting responses will be printed in the next issue of Hot Tide). Much of this comes from past issues of Insurrection and pamphlets from Elephant Editions (see the Insurrection Page on our website or write us if interested).

1: THE STATE WILL NOT JUST DISAPPEAR; ATTACK

--The State of capital will not "wither away," as it seems many anarchists have come to believe--not only entrenched in abstract positions of "waiting," but some even openly condemning the acts of those for whom the creation of the new world depends on the destruction of the old. Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise.

--It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although propaganda has a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act.

--The force of an insurrection is social, not military. The measure for evaluating the importance of a generalized revolt is not the armed clash, but on the contrary the amplitude of the paralysis of the economy, of normality.

2. SELF-ACTIVITY versus managed revolt: from insurrection to revolution

--As anarchists, the revolution is our constant point of reference, no matter what we are doing or what problem we are concerned with. But the revolution is not a myth simply to be used as a point of reference. Precisely because it is a concrete event, it must be built daily through more modest attempts which do not have all the liberating characteristics of the social revolution in the true sense. These more modest attempts are insurrections. In them the uprising of the most exploited and excluded of society and the most politically sensitized minority opens the way to the possible involvement of increasingly wider strata of exploited on a flux of rebellion which could lead to revolution.

--Struggles must be developed, both in the intermediate and long term. Clear strategies are necessary to allow different

-Because we want to destroy the capitalist order of the world which, thanks to computer science restructuring has become technologically useful to no one but the managers of class domination.

-Because we are for the immediate, destructive attack against the structures, individuals and organizations of Capital and the State.

-Because we constructively criticize all those who are in situations of compromise with power in their belief that the revolutionary struggle is impossible at the present time.

-Because rather than wait, we have decided to proceed to action, even if the time is not ripe.

-Because we want to put an end to this state of affairs right away rather than wait until conditions make its transformation possible. These are the reasons why we are anarchist, revolutionaries and insurrectionalists.

Notes on Insurrectionary Anarchism

Insurrectionary anarchism is not an ideological solution to all social problems, a commodity on the capitalist market of ideologies and opinions, but an on-going praxis aimed at putting an end to the domination of the state and the continuance of capitalism, which requires analysis and discussion to advance. We don't look to some ideal society or offer an image of utopia for public consumption. Throughout history, most anarchists, except those who believed that society would evolve to the point that it would leave the state behind, have been insurrectionary anarchists. Most simply, this means that the state will not merely wither away, thus anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat; what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded. Here we spell out some implications that we and some other insurrectionary anarchists draw from this general problem: if the state will not disappear on its own, how then do we end its existence? It is, therefore, primarily a practice, and focuses on the

formal leadership—that of the organization. These structures for synthesis share some common traits. They have a formal theoretical basis, a series of doctrine to which all members are expected to adhere. Because such groups are seeking numbers this basis tends to be on the lowest common denominator—a set of simplistic statements with no depth of analysis and with a dogmatic tendency that militates against deep analysis. They also have a formal practical orientation—a specific mode of acting by which the group as a whole determines what they will do. The necessity such groups feel to synthesize the various struggle under their direction—to the extent they succeed—leads to a formalization and ritualization of the struggles undermining creativity and imagination and turning the various struggles into mere tools for the promotion of the organization. From all of this it becomes clear, that whatever claims such an organization may make about its desire for insurrection and revolution, in fact its first aim is to increase membership. It is important to realize that this problem can exist even when no structures have been created. When anarchism promotes itself in an evangelistic manner, it is clear that a formal theoretical basis has imposed its rigidity on the fluidity of ideas necessary for developing real analyses. In such a situation, the practical orientation—the modes of action also become formalized—one need only look at the ritualized confrontations by which so many anarchists strive to get their message across. The only purpose that this apparently informal formalization serves is to try to convince the various people in struggle that they should call themselves anarchists—that is, to synthesize the struggles under the leadership of the black flag. In other words to gain numbers of members for this formal non-organization. Dealing with the media to explain who anarchists are seems to enforce this way of interacting with the other exploited in struggle, because it reinforces the separation of anarchists from the rest of those exploited by this society and leaves the impression that the anarchists have some special understanding of things that makes them the *de facto* vanguard of the revolution.

So for the purpose of creating our insurrectional project we want to organize informally: without a formal theoretical basis so that ideas and analyses can be developed fluidly in a way that allows to understand the present and act against it and

without a formal practical orientation so that we can act with an intelligent projectual spontaneity and creativity. A significant aspect of this informal organization would be a network of like-minded people. This network would base itself on a reciprocal knowledge of each other which requires honest, straightforward discussions of ideas, analyses and aims. Complete agreement would not be necessary, but a real understanding of differences would. The aim of this network would not be the recruitment of members—it would not be a membership organization—but rather developing methods for intervening in various struggles in an insurrectional manner, and coordinating such intervention. The basis for participation would be affinity—meaning the capacity to act together. This capacity stems from knowing where to find each other and studying and analyzing the social situation together in order to move to action together. . Since there is no formal organization to join, this network would only grow on the basis of real affinity of ideas and practice. This informal network would consist of the tools we develop for the discussion of social analyses and the methods for intervening in struggles that we create.

This network is basically a way for individuals and small groups to coordinate their struggles. The real point of action is the affinity group. An affinity group is an informal, temporary group based on affinity—that is real knowledge of each other—that comes together to accomplish a specific aim. Affinity develops through a deepening knowledge of each other: knowledge of how the other thinks about social problems and of the methods of intervention they consider appropriate. Real affinity cannot be based on a lowest common denominator, but must include a real understanding of differences as well as similarities between those involved, because it is in the knowledge of our difference that we can discover how we can really act together. Since the affinity group comes together for a specific circumscribed aim, it is a temporary formation—one that ceases to exist once the aim is accomplished. Thus it remains informal, without membership.

With this informal basis, once we recognize that our own freedom will remain impoverished as long as the masters continue to control the conditions under which most people ex-

ist, depriving them of the ability to freely determine their own lives, we recognize that our own liberation depends on intervention in the struggles of the exploited classes as a whole. Our involvement is not one of evangelism—the propagandistic method would place us on the same level as political movements, and we are not politicians or activists, but individuals who want our lives back and therefore take action for ourselves with others. Thus, we do not propose any specific anarchist organization for the exploited to join, nor a doctrine to put faith in. Rather we seek to link our specific struggle as anarchists to that of the rest of the exploited by encouraging self-

organization, self-determination, the refusal of delegation and of any sort of negotiation, accommodation or compromise with power, and a practice based on direct action and the necessity of attack against the structures of power and control. The point is to encourage and participate in specific attacks against specific aspects of the state, capital and the various structures and apparatus of control. Since our purpose is to struggle against our own exploitation with other exploited people, certainly with the aim of projecting toward insurrection, there can be no guaranteeing of any results—with no organization striving to gain members, we can't look for an increase in numbers. There is no way to know the end. But though we have know guarantees, no certainty of accomplishing our aim, success is not the primary reason for our struggle. The primary reason is that not to act is the guaranteed defeat of an empty and meaningless existence. To act to take our life back is to already regain it on the terrain of struggle, to already become the creator of one's own existence, even if in constant battle with a monstrous order determined to crush us.

Why we are Insurrectional Anarchists

-Because we are struggling along with the excluded to alleviate and ultimately abolish the conditions of exploitation imposed by the included.

-Because we consider it possible to contribute to the development of struggles that are appearing spontaneously everywhere, turning them into mass insurrections, that is to say, actual revolutions.